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A healthy forest, fire protection and jobs are all things we want to see in our community. The Bybee project has been designed to do these things, and more.

You may have heard about the project.

I want to clarify why we are proposing to selectively “treat” this particular area of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, and what that means to you.

The Bybee project will selectively remove trees in order to achieve forest health objectives. The project area is very crowded and thick with trees. These crowded conditions are not healthy, making them vulnerable to diseases, insect invasions and wildfires. A healthy forest, one that has a variety of tree species with varying sizes and ages, is much more resilient and resistant than a forest that is not. Failing to take action to reduce these crowded conditions could lead to further disease, tree mortality and catastrophic wildfire.

Fast forward to fire season. If a fire starts in the Bybee project area and we have done nothing to treat it, there is a fairly good chance the fire could move up into the tree canopy. Once a fire moves into the tops of the trees, firefighters simply cannot stop it. This could have potentially devastating consequences for nearby Crater Lake National Park and forest creatures like the Northern Spotted Owl.

There is concern regarding how the treated areas will look after the project is completed. How will we go about “treating” the forest on the Bybee project? We can treat in a variety of ways, depending on the alternative, or combination of alternatives, selected. We are proposing to thin trees on approximately 3,000 acres. In the thinned areas, there will be more space between trees. On approximately 40 acres, the spread of disease will require us to remove additional trees, creating  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre openings that will be irregularly shaped to mimic naturally occurring openings. Depending on the site, some of the created openings may require planting with disease-tolerant species, such as pine and cedar. Overstory trees may also be removed in mistletoe infected stands to allow more sunlight to penetrate, encouraging the smaller trees to grow.

It will be necessary to construct a maximum of 13 miles of temporary roads to complete this project; however, all roads will be rehabilitated once the project is completed. In addition, we will rehabilitate some old roadbeds in the project area and decommission approximately 5.5 miles of existing roads that cross streams or are located in highly erosive soils in the project planning area. This decommissioning of roads will actually improve the Bybee project area from a medium to a low risk category for watershed health by increasing water filtration and allowing vegetation to re-establish.

When the Forest Service completes the proposed treatment in the Bybee project area, is it an insurance policy against wildfires threatening the park, or other forested areas that we enjoy? We will never be able to entirely eliminate the threat of catastrophic wildland fires, but by treating areas, we reduce the chances of fires getting so large we cannot stop them. We also reduce the chances of an insect infestation becoming epidemic across the landscape. Are forest treatments the right thing to do? We

think so. When the Forest Service selectively cuts and/or thins a stand of trees to improve the trees' health and resilience for the long-term, we are better able to protect the trees, and other natural resources that so many of us value.

In addition to enhancing the long-term health of the forest in the Bybee project area, we'll also be providing wood for timber products and jobs for local communities. Forty-five million board feet translates into 500 jobs and enough lumber to build 3,000 homes. We consider taking this type of action in the forest to be very positive, both ecologically and economically.

Sincerely,

Rob MacWhorter

Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor